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**Estate Gift from Bearss Family Boosts Josephine County Educational Fund to Nearly \$3.5 Million
\$274,000 Donation Will Benefit Area High School Students.**

Grants Pass, Oregon, July 31, 2012 – The Josephine County Educational Fund (JCEF) has received the second-largest single donation in its thirty year history. The generous \$274,000 gift, added to two previous estate donations made in 2011, means a scholarship boon for graduating High School students who apply for higher education assistance.

Bob Busch, long-time Secretary-Treasurer and Director of JCEF explains, “The Foundation is set up to invest donations and each year awards scholarships from the earned income.”

This past May that earned income totaled \$112,000 in scholarships awarded to area graduating seniors. JCEF also oversees and distributes a variety of University, Military, and Service Club Scholarships, dispersing in 2012 a total of nearly 2.5 million dollars to seniors attending the five Josephine County High Schools.

Busch states, “From June 2011 to June 2012 we’ve received approximately 1.5 million into the Fund. That represents a 90% increase to our budget.”

And the Fund continues to grow, adding in other organization’s scholarships – such as the Grants Pass Active Club, sponsor of the annual Memorial Day Boatnik celebration – which recently turned the administration of their scholarships over to JCEF.

Since its inception in 1982, JCEF’s track record for investments has been a solid 5-7% average return. Anyone who donates into this fund also retains control over their tax deductible gifts, and can stipulate just how the scholarships are to be awarded. In the case of Earnest and Madge Bearss, their scholarship is to be awarded to a graduating Grants Pass High School student who will be attending an Oregon University. Ashland High School was also awarded a similar estate donation for their graduates.

Ernest Herbert Bearss was a graduate of Grants Pass High School in 1931. In 1988 Grants Pass High School celebrated The Centennial Hall of Fame representing the most noteworthy alumni of the school’s first 100 years. Ernest Bearss was among the most outstanding 100 alumni formally recognized by his alma mater. Bearss experienced a highly

distinguished military career in the U.S. Army, spanning 30 years. He saw action during World War II in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater with the rank of Major and Lieutenant Colonel.

Ernest married Vala Sofia Forsberg on December 21, 1940 who predeceased him on January 14, 1986, after 45 years. He married Madge Francis Mitchell on May 22, 1987. Ernest passed away on November 7, 2009; followed by Madge on November 13, 2011, who died at the age of 101. There were no children from either of Ernest's marriages, so the Bearss made plans to leave their estate in trust to ten separate charities, including Christian, Service Club, and Educational organizations. At their bequest, The Josephine County Educational Fund was left 9% of the Bearss Estate.

Madge was born a twin on July 19, 1910 in Ashland, Oregon to Blanche and William Mitchell. Madge grew up and received early education in Ashland, graduating from high school there in the class of 1927, and from Southern Oregon State with a teaching degree in 1929. Madge taught mostly second-graders throughout several regions of Oregon and retired in 1983 after 46 years of teaching. Madge was preceded in death by her parents, her beloved twin and her loving husband.

Busch said, "The Fund is so very appreciative of these trust gifts set aside through estate planning, which allow for more financial ease for future generations of graduates."

For more information about Josephine County Educational Fund, contact Bob Busch at (541) 226-7898 or email sodelbia@hotmail.com.

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